THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) Government does not procure tobacco directly. However, the Minimum Support price (MSP) for various grades of tobacco are announced each year by the Taboacco board on the recommendation of Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Some of the steps taken to enhance exports of toobacco and tobacco products include, inter-alia, reorientation of the domestic production of tobacco to meet changing international needs, enhancement of quality and productivity levels, monitoring and strict control of pesticide residues, aligning grading to international standards, and permitting imports for product development.

An Expert Committee has been set up by the Ministry of Health to examine the tax revenue and foreign exchange earnings, employment and consumer expenditure on the one hand and the oast of teirtary level medical care facilities for treatment of tobacco related diseases, losses due to fire hazard, ecological damage due to deforestation and disposal of tobacco related waste on the other hand with a view to making an economic study of the impact of tobacco consumption.

Export Incentives

3233. SHRI YERRA NARAYANA-SWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item appearing in the Business Standard dated 18th February, 1997, captioned "Export incentives likely to be enhanced".

(b) whether there is a proposal to simplify and rationalise all export incentives;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether the new policy will benefit exporters; and

(e) if so, by when this policy will come into force?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. The Government has already simplified and rationalised all the export promotional schemes given in Exim Policy. The details of these schemes are available in the Export-import Policy (1997—2002). The schemes of Export Promotion Capital Goods, Duty Exemption, Diamond, Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Scheme and scheme of Export Oriented Units, Units in Export Processing Zones, Electronic Hardware Technology Park and Software Technology Park have been reationalised and simplified considerably. The Government has tried to deregulate and simplify procedures and to create a congenial environment for exporting community, so that the benefit of the policy can be availed by the exporters.

(e) The policy has come into force from 1.4.1997.

Monitoring System to Estimate Exports and Imports of Foodgrains

3234. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any monitoring system to estimate exports or imports of Foodgrains in any given year;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether this system can be improved;

(d) whether sufficient attention is not being paid to the strategy in export or import of foodgrains; and

(e)if so, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) and (c) It is the Policy of the Government to allow the exports of item of mass consumption in such a manner that it docs not compromise the food security system. For this purpose, except Non-Basmati rice the exports of Food Grains are either under licensing or subject to registration with Agricultural Processed Food and Export Development Authoritj-(APEDA). The import of cereals is canalised through Food Corporation of India (FCI) and import of wheat flour is restricted and subject to licensing. After actual exports or imports have been effected, the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S), Calcutta complies the export-import statistics. The system in vogue (computerised) is working satisfactorily.

(d) No. Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

CBI Inquiry about STC

3235. SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether an inquiry had been conducted by CBI in respect of State Trading Corporation;

(b) if so, the details thereof together with the amount involved therein;

(c) whether any action has been taken on the said Report;

(d) if so, the details of officials involved in the racket; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BALLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) to (e) In some cases the investigation has been completed by CBI and are at the stage of trial in different courts. Some cases have been closed by CBI after investigation. In a few cases, CBI is conducting its investigations.

Removal of import Curbs

3236. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: SHRI O.P. KOHLI:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned 'EU demand removal of import curbs in two years' which appeared in the Hindustan Times dated the 21st March, 1997;

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereto;

(c) the status of balance of payment as on date and the estimated projection of BOP by June, 1999, the deadline given by EU; and

(d) the item and the agenda for discussion of Brussels scheduled during April, 1997?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BALLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) to (d) The news item referred to in part (a) of the question had appeared in the Hindustan Times dated 22 March, 1997. The news item draws on a press briefing by Mr. Herve Jouanjean, Director, European Commission, at the conclusion of bilateral discussions with India on issues relating to quantitative restrictions maintained on imports for safequarding the balance of payments.

It is recalled that during the consultations held with India in Geneva in January, 1997, the Committee on Balance of payment Restrictions of the World Trade Organisation, after hearing the statements made by India and other Members and the International Monetary Fund, invited India to present a plan to eliminate the quantitative restrictions on imports maintained by India for balance of payments purposes and agreed to resume the consulations in the week beginning 2 June, 1997 to consider the plan.

As a follow up of discussions held in